

Thoughts on Pride: no coal dug

Article (Published Version)

Robinson, Lucy (2019) Thoughts on Pride: no coal dug. Open Library of Humanities, 5 (1). pp. 1-16. ISSN 2056-6700

This version is available from Sussex Research Online: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/76772/>

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies and may differ from the published version or from the version of record. If you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the URL above for details on accessing the published version.

Copyright and reuse:

Sussex Research Online is a digital repository of the research output of the University.

Copyright and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable, the material made available in SRO has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.



Open Library of Humanities



Part of the Ubiquity
Partner Network



Open Library of Humanities

Pride Revisited: Cinema, Activism and Re-Activation

How to Cite: Robinson, L 2019 Thoughts on *Pride*: No Coal Dug. *Open Library of Humanities*, 5(1): 37, pp. 1–16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.317>

Published: 22 May 2019

Peer Review:

This article has been internally by guest editors for *Open Library of the Humanities*, which is a journal published by the Open Library of the Humanities.

Copyright:

© 2019 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Open Access:

Open Library of Humanities is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

Digital Preservation:

The Open Library of Humanities and all its journals are digitally preserved in the CLOCKSS scholarly archive service.

PRIDE REVISITED: CINEMA, ACTIVISM AND RE-ACTIVATION

Thoughts on *Pride*: No Coal Dug

Lucy Robinson

University of Sussex, UK
l.robinson@sussex.ac.uk

Pride tells the story of a group of London lesbian and gay activists who offer their support to the striking miners in Dulais, South Wales. This article reflexively uncovers the layers through which the story of LGSM has been remembered, forgotten, and re-remembered through its personal and political connections.

Pride tells the story of a group of London lesbian and gay activists who offer their support to the striking miners in Dulais, South Wales. I love an inspiring weepy film. I love films about the 80s. I love Lesbian and Gay Men Support the Miners (LGSM). I love Bill Nighy and I'd developed a researcher's crush on LGSM activist Mark Ashton throughout my PhD research on gay men and the left (Robinson, 2003). The song 'Bread and Roses' resonates with me so much that I have the symbols tattooed on my hand, and our daughters read out the lyrics at our wedding. But I'm going to start with a confession. I avoided seeing *Pride* for nearly 16 months and only eventually watched it because I had to.

In the end I watched it because Catherine Grant very kindly invited me to speak at the event that she organised with Diarmaid Kelliher on '*Pride* and its Precursors' and I was too honoured, and too embarrassed, to say no. When the film first came out, I ducked and dived out of press requests to comment on it. I had toyed with the idea of presenting at the symposium without actually having watched the film, maybe as a sort of thought experiment. I'd floated the idea over drinks with Dr Ben Jones, a talented and creative historian from UEA, but I'd lost my confidence after he described some of the scenes I might have missed out on (the film does end with an alien invasion and massive shoot out, right?).

In a massive act of generosity Catherine Grant encouraged me to use my resistance as the starting point for my contribution to the symposium and to this collection. My reticence about watching the film was two-fold; fittingly, these were both personal and political. One issue related to the politics of uncovering lost stories. When *Pride* came out it was heralded as an inspiring lost story, perfect for our troubled times. My first thoughts about the importance, and perhaps my resistance to, the power of *Pride* to inspire, related to which stories do get remembered, and how wilfully others forgotten. I had researched and written about LGSM and the intersections between gay activism, trade union solidarity, popular culture and the Communist Party in my PhD and then in my first book, *Gay Men and the Left* (Robinson, 2011).

I suppose it isn't surprising, then, that I was resistant to the idea of LGSM as a forgotten story to be rediscovered in a moving inspiring film. Of course, overly wordy analysis in an academic book doesn't constitute a central role in popular historical memory. However, it did rather rub my nose in the moat around the ivory tower that something I had spent most of the nineties researching, writing and talking about was apparently completely unknown. Take that Impact Agenda! – I wrote a book and no-one noticed. But this isn't sour grapes. It is the point. University agendas encourage us to uncover the covered. On top of the drive towards ever more originality, our politics might also encourage us to uncover marginalised voices from the past. But we, the academy, are not in charge of what gets to count as history or what gets remembered. We are not Indiana Jones searching for the lost story of solidarity. Rather than searching for hidden treasures, as a historian I find myself more and more interested in how stories got lost in the first place. I've got no interest in whether the film is accurate or not, but I am interested in how it wields its stories, and its sense of authenticity and the power of its memory. Something interesting happens when stories are designated forgotten or lost, and then re-designated as remembered or found.

It goes without saying that I was not alone in remembering LGSM, even indirectly. Even before the film came out, my reading list for the topic was already a decent size. The events were videoed at the time and then later digitally shared in two short documentaries available on YouTube, *All Out: Dancing in Dulais*, and a video of the Hacienda gig on the 'Pits and Perverts' tour. LGSM is discussed at some length in books about gay history and politics, particularly those that emphasise the importance of personal testimony (*Radical Records* edited by Cant and Hemmings, in 1988, for example). Gay Left analysed LGSM at the time and Simon Watney has written about LGSM in two edited collections since (Watney, 1996; Watney, 2000; Gay Left Collective, 1980). Ray Goodspeed, LGSM activist, wrote a long article about LGSM in 1989 which he republished for Left Unity when the film was released. Hefina Headon's daughter, Jayne Francis-Headon, describes telling the story of LGSM 'many times over the years'

(Tate, 2017: 277). Participant and activist Nicola Field documented LGSM in her book *Over the Rainbow: Money, Class and Homophobia* in 1995 (and in the wake of the film successfully crowd sourced funding for the timely republication of her book). The new edition reflects back on the re-remembering of LGSM post-*Pride*. Its new preface brings the stamp of authenticity through endorsements by both Jonathan Blake and Gethin Roberts, and demonstrates its current utility by inclusion in the LGBTQ curriculum collated by campaigners Educate and Celebrate (Field, 2016; 10–11). In fact in 2008 LGSM was described as ‘the most famous’ example of unity between gay activism and workplace organisation (Fannin, 2008). Kelliher groups *Pride* with other cultural representations of the strike from around the same time, such as Micheál Kerrigan’s play *Pits and Perverts* which was produced in Derry in 2013 and Owen Gower’s documentary *Still the Enemy Within* from 2014.

The film has, in turn, heralded a new set of work looking at LGSM and its history, as well as work on representation in *Pride* itself. Both Kelliher (2015) and Daryl Leeworthy (2016) have produced impressive articles in the wake of the film, both of which move far beyond an account of ‘what happened’ to think about why it matters instead. More recently Daisy Payling (2017) has used the film, alongside contemporaneous archival research, to break down popular understanding of Thatcher’s Britain as a simply divided society, and draw out the complexities of changing layers of solidarity through the life of the strike. Having always felt I hadn’t really done a good enough job of researching LGSM in its own terms, rather than for the overall argument of my book, I was delighted to read the new and exciting work around LGSM. I had been an unfunded PhD student, juggling parenthood and research with paid work (and breastfeeding). The journey deep into the archives to immerse myself in the documentation and experiences of LGSM had been beyond me. I had worked through the minutes of leftist organisations, gay organisations, the Hall Carpenter Archive, mountains of pre digitalised newspapers and the secondary literature, and it became clear to me that LGSM was an important story for gay history, but it was only part of the story I was telling. LGSM, after all, helped connect gay politics to the tools of production. The miners have a special significance, after all: Thatcher didn’t pick on them for no reason. They produced the fuel for the

engines of industrialisation, so valued that their work was understood as war work. They bring with them fantasies of masculinity. Their labour marked on their bodies risking their lives to keep the nation moving. What better proof could there be that the third stage of gay liberation, 'to change the world', was still possible?

I have been deeply appreciative of the later careful archival work on the campaign. Because even if my work on LGSM didn't matter, I knew that LGSM mattered. Scholars like Kelliher, Leeworthy and Payling have followed in the LGSM activists' footsteps; they have got on the ground, connected with the stories and thought about the most fabulous ways to get the message out there. Even more importantly we can now read the words of those who were there. Tim Take (2017) has woven together a set of oral histories, with original press representation. Importantly, Take's work credits LGSM with joint authorship, and makes only gentle editorial interventions to nudge on the narrative. Together these voices provide an overriding account of the campaign that keeps their individual experiences intact. It feels right that histories of LGSM should shake up ideas of 'us' and 'them', and who 'we' are to tell 'their' stories.

Why then was it so important that *Pride* was seen as uncovering LGSM as a lost story? Rediscovering lost stories from the past is a political act, a way of redressing an imbalance in the present, utilising ghosts from the past to enact justice today. There is a long history of writing our own canon, replacing the stories and heroes that we are given with our own. When we uncover our heroes and heroines from the past we also uncover the process through which they have been forgotten or silenced. We get to make a double move: we get to prove that 'we' have been oppressed, marginalised, silenced, forgotten in the past. And we also get to show that 'we' can do something about it in the present and use these heroes to imagine a better future. The importance of rediscovering lost, silenced and marginalised heroes and heroines is a tactic that has deep roots in both the women's, black and gay liberation movements. Feminist, black and gay historians have long understood that uncovering the past and documenting contemporaneous struggles were important forms of activism. The stories from the past inspire us and allow us to imagine ourselves into a new collective community tied together by the stories we share. If their forgetting demonstrates our oppression, the remembering unpicks the processes through which we were oppressed.

Francis-Headon told the LGSM story often, 'to as many people as would listen', but people just couldn't believe it was true (Tate, 2017: 277). Stephen Beresford, the film's writer, described it as a 'lost story' (Tate, 2017: 279). Those involved, cautioned by the loss of so many of their generation through HIV and AIDS, thought that their story would die with them. Jonathan Blake referred to photographic evidence to prove LGSM hadn't been a 'fantasy' in an interview with the *Independent* (Nianias, 2015). The work that went into forgetting LGSM made me think about the idea of perpetual novelty. The need for claims of originality when pitching a film, or evaluating research, encourage us to market ourselves as the discoverer of a lost or uncovered story (for both film producers and historians). For me the issue of the lost story is not that some parts of history have been forgotten, but that when they are remembered, when they do come into the light, it is always as if for the first time and at the cost of other stories. According to most of *Pride's* coverage press, LGSM and the striking miners were an 'unlikely alliance'. Yet, gay men and women are woven through our histories of struggle, in and beyond the workplace (Thomson, 2014; Nelson, 2014). My own work positioned Mark Ashton in a story populated by Colin MacInnes, George Melly, Anthony Grey, Graham Chapman, Ken Livingstone, Peter Tatchell, Holly Johnson and Billy Bragg. Gethin Roberts draws a line of radical inheritance through LGSM. He understands himself as part of radical queer heritage — Edward Carpenter, Harry Hay, Stonewall rioters, Brixton Fairies — and has in turn fed into later and current campaigns for adequate health provision, disability rights, refugee support and against racism and Islamophobia. This is a long-established queer class-conscious radical tradition (Field, 2016: 13). Yet every time it is remembered it is as if for the first time.

Media memory is at the heart of how we have remembered, or have been haunted by, the miners' strike, and gay politics. Both striking miners and the gay community recognised that they were in the middle of a media war. Cultural representation is an armoury, whether seeing glimpses of yourself that squeeze through the cracks or whether seeing the worst excesses of prejudice in the press: these glimpses are all part of the personal and public struggle for equality. I'm thinking here about the important role of films like *Victim* for the campaign for law reform. As so eloquently

explained by Andy Medhurst, Dirk Bogarde's performance as Melville Farr meant something very different for isolated and out gay audiences: it meant that they were seen. *Victim* also shows that film do something. The film was an important part of the public discussion that eventually led to the Sexual Offences Act (Medhurst, 1984).

Pride knows that cultural representation matters, in the press, in music and the spaces it is enjoyed, in literature, in photography, in broadcast media and in DIY communication. One of the points of connection in the film between striking miners and LGSM was, after all, that they were equally hated by Thatcher, the police and the tabloid press. *Pride* makes use of archive footage of Orgreave, of Scargill, of AIDS information adverts and of the miners' return to work. These archival touches ground the film in a remembered reality, but also remind us how much being seen matters. The story line around the press leak, for example, weaves together representation, self-representation and reclamation, using the headline 'Pits and Perverts' as the name of the musical tour raising funds and awareness for LGSM. A bookshop, Gay's the Word, not only provided access to literary acknowledgment of gay lives: it acted as a space in which to collect and collectivise, across the past and the present. It built and housed a canon of texts to inspire and equip later generations of activists and a physical space in which to organise around that inspiration. In a bridge, embodied by Jonathan and his amazing dance moves, Gay's the Word holds the journey between the first growth of the liberation movement, through the 80s and beyond. And it now sells the historical accounts of the campaign and holds copies of the LGSMs minutes in its basement.

Unlike much of the Left's response at the time, when *Pride* came out various strands of the Left vied with each other to claim LGSM as the inspiration for their particular campaigns in 2015. Anti-UKIP activists, Solidarity in Australia, *Socialist Review* and *The Morning Star* all attached themselves to its legacy by describing *Pride* as 'inspiring'. Although the organised Left had not been overly supportive of LGSM, individual members mapped the patchwork of various socialist, parliamentary, communist and Trotskyite parties and factions of the time. Dave Lewis has described it as a 'Heinz 57 varieties' politically (Tate, 2017: 152). Since the film's release these varieties of leftist groups have traced their heritage from the LGSM. Sometimes the heritage claimed is inspirational or ideological, but in other cases leftist groups can

claim a more direct legacy when they include members of LGSM amongst their own supporters. These connections were more biographical than inspirational. *The Morning Star* could rightly claim Mark Ashton as one of their own. He had been the chair of the Young Communist League. *The Morning Star* could also rightly bemoan the forgetting of that particular part of the story (Frost, 2014). As they noted, we might be allowed to have out gay heroes now, but not necessarily out gay Communist heroes.

When the new political party Left Unity was founded in 2013 it also claimed LGSM's lineage. It described *Pride* as 'inspiring' whilst simultaneously claiming LGSM's legacy, as three of the original group are now associated with Left Unity (Goodspeed, 2014). Not only had LGSM and Left Unity overlapped in terms of individual associates, Left Unity understood the potential of film as a political act, campaign tool and curator of activist memory (Left Unity was launched the year before *Pride's* release, by film director Ken Loach).

With Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour Leader in 2015, it became less clear what space there was for Left Unity in the constellation. LGSM's legacy was redeployed in support and defence of Corbyn (Chakelian, 2015). Original members of LGSM like Mike Jackson re-joined the Labour Party in 2016 and urged LGBTQ voters to back Corbyn in recognition for his consistent support of LGBT communities (Jackson, 2017; Jackson, 2018). LGSM made a formal statement backing Corbyn's re-election. They drew Corbyn directly into *Pride's* inspirational currency and into LGSM's legacy as activists. The statement began: 'We are original members of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (1984–85)', and went on to express their confidence in Corbyn, defending him from criticisms in the mainstream press. Like Jackson's personal validation of Corbyn's service to the LGBTQ community, LGSM's collective statement recognised a shared activist journey, pointing out that Corbyn had been a 'steadfast and tireless' supporter of the striking miners and their communities. It closed with the words 'We believe that LGSM should never forget its friends. Solidarity forever!' (Lewis, 2016).

In the 1980s however the Left had not been so concerned with LGSM. The gay press understood the importance of a colliery band marching at the front of a Gay Pride march, whilst the leftist press barely acknowledged it. LGSM were hardly

present at all in the existing histories of the Left and barely covered in the left-wing press and newsletters at the time. LGSM had mattered to gay histories, but seemingly less so to Leftist histories during the 1990s and 2000s. By the time *Pride* was made it seems that it had also been forgotten by LGBTQ cultural memory. Gethin Roberts described the reaction of people at Pride 2014 when the film's cast turned up to film with a 'prop', an LGSM banner: 'Many young people knew little or nothing about the story' of the miners' strike, let alone LGSM. He remembered being asked if the banner was 'something to do with Turkish or Chilean miners' (Field, 2016: 12). Awareness of a global context in the present seemingly eroded *Pride*'s sense of its own resistant past, perhaps. *Pride* reminds us that Pride used to be immediately, and domestically, political.

So why, does it matter now, to either the Left or to queer communities (and the intersections thereof)? Whose present is being haunted by *Pride* and for what purpose? What battle is this representation arming? Beyond a few symbolic motifs, such as the red star on Ashton's collar or the moment that he is heckled as a 'commie' in the gay bar, for example, the formal Left is largely invisible in *Pride*. Despite Ashton's significant role in the Communist Party, and ability to traverse the vanguardist in-fighting of the Left at the time, this part of the story is absent. Unions and political parties are there to be bypassed. (I am not criticising a film for leaving out some bits of a complex, messy political history, but I am interested in which bits it remembers and why).

Our cultural memory of the struggle against Thatcher through film has been one that has pitted identity politics against class. In the run of films about social issues in Thatcher's Britain (*The Full Monty*, *Brassed Off*, *Billy Elliot*, etc) women and gay men, brass bands and troupes of strippers get to come in after the real struggle has already been lost and cheer everyone up. As in earlier films like *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything* (1995) and *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (1994) gay men are really useful at teaching straight couples how to get it together. In one of the *Pride*'s musical pivots, Jonathan calls upon the Gods of Disco, to literally own a room. The song he dances to, Shirley & Co's 'Shame, Shame, Shame', from 1975, takes us back to the pre-Thatcher years, but also reminds us of gay pride's rebuttal to shame. It also acts

as a nice riposte to some of the miners' concerns, that they didn't want to watch 'two men dancing' together (Tate, 2017: 171). In the wake of industrial defeat, the identity groups get their consolation prize: Billy got to dance, the women of Dulais got a dildo, lesbians learnt the rules of Bingo, the band played one more time, but the miners lost.

Pride makes us evaluate what constitutes a victory and question what it is that we would settle for. Although the scene where Siân repeatedly staples the LGSM poster to the notice board sets up the tension between gay London and the Welsh miner, it is a different use of two posters that suggest a much more complicated tension. Two posters, in two different places, draw out the tensions between surviving the struggle and winning the battle. Whilst LGSM put up posters calling for 'Victory to the Miners', in the Miners' welfare centre the slogan is 'No One Shall Starve'. Cultural memory, gender and sexual politics and the pleasure of the ruby slipper are set up as the consolation for losing the former battle (victory), whilst managing, with huge effort, the second (survival). Payling (2017: 257) pins down what ultimately happens when solidarity is pitched at the level of 'generosity' rather than shared context or analysis: 'for some this may reflect an emotional truth but it also cleanses the story of political machinations'. The fear is that we are left with bread and circuses, rather than bread and roses, to fill the gap left by the loss of working-class organisation.

In *Pride*, Mark Ashton needs to go to the Welsh hills to be told what socialism is. And the version of socialism he is given, a motif throughout the film, is of two hands shaking, an act that has particular resonance in the light of AIDS, when Princess Diana's handshake with patients living with AIDS was front page news. The touching of hands is an act of mutual acknowledgment, but it is not a shared analysis, let alone an understanding of a shared solution. It is a passing moment of connection. So despite these tensions and ambiguities between identities and collectivities, *Pride* is a film for intersectionality and identity; of friends that never knew they had each other. The political landscape and the collective material conditions have changed, not least due to Thatcher's criminalisation of trade union activity, cranked up more still with the latest (2016) Trade Union legislation. It is not as though they have stopped coming for us, so we still need useful stories to organise ourselves. These

stories need to be intersectional because our collective identities are. Nicola Field (2016: 18) looked back at her original work and recognised the shifts between class organisation and collective identities in contemporary intersectional politics. She would be, she wrote, be less 'searing' of 'single-issue, cultural, direct-action, and identity politics' if she was writing her account now.

Here, I suggest, is the work that remembering is doing for us now. It isn't perfect, but it isn't simple either, and it seems to work. Identities and intersections are messy. *Pride* doesn't try to pin them down too rigidly. The contrasting motifs are playful – choux pastry and welsh cakes, push button phones and ring dials – but *Pride* does more than designate a hard line between 'us' and 'them'. The film is careful not to wholly set up worldly gay London vs innocent straight Dulais. The quiet solidarity of making sandwiches together intersects differences within the Dulais community. Rather than leaving a choice between supporting the strike, or fighting AIDS, the two threats are mapped onto each other. We see violent homophobia in London and queer lives in Wales. We see gay men so wounded by the homophobia that they experienced in their Welsh childhoods that they could not extend the hand of solidarity to their homelands, something backed up by the memories in the book version of *Pride* (Tate, 2017: 147). The community, led by women's voices, singing 'Bread and Roses', is more rousing and moving than Mark Ashton's speech in the Miners' Welfare (and did not involve standing on the seats, but instead standing together). It is Siân, a straight woman from Wales, driving the LGSM van, who disrupts Bromley's family christening and rescues him from his birth family. It is the supposedly marginalised lesbian, Steph, who offers him her bed and hand of friendship.

So I am suggesting that rather than setting up one group against another, *Pride* sets up personal experiences against an abstract concept of solidarity. The inspiring story left for today's activists is one of a shared sense of individual oppression. Gay men's experiences of legal defence and police procedure is set up against a trade union structure that seemingly can't offer its striking members adequate legal advice. That is not necessarily the same as solidarity, but it is an emotional connection, a radical empathy perhaps. In the new preface to Field's analysis of LGSM, Elly Barnes, who founded the campaign Educate and Celebrate, pinpoints *Pride* and LGSM's

intersectional pedagogical possibilities: 'Let's apply these arguments [raised by LGSM and by Field's analysis] and create the beginnings of a cohesive community with people and social justice at its core' (2016: 11).

I should also think about what it is that these stories have done for me and for what purpose. At the symposium I talked how LGSM and Mark Ashton had talked to me beyond *Pride's* contradictions and how LGSM had come to teach me about Solidarity, or at least radical empathy. In many ways Mark Ashton was at the heart of my PhD and I have often used him as the explanation as to how I ended up working on gay men and the left. Two particular objects came to mind when I thought about why LGSM mattered to me, and why it has been a useful story for me to continue to remember. They also remind me of the different way that popular culture shares political stories.

The first is the album *Red* by the Communards which was released in 1987, the same year, in which, aged 17, I gave birth to my first daughter. On the album, the song 'For a Friend' is written for Mark Ashton and the band had performed at the *Pits and Perverts* at the Camden Electric Ballroom gig re-enacted in *Pride*. The album's proceeds were donated to the AIDS charity set up in Mark Ashton's memory. At the time, reading the sleeve notes fused the political connections in my life as a teenage mum and taught me a life-long lesson to take popular culture very very seriously and love it very very passionately.

The second is one of the two squares in remembrance of Mark Ashton in the AIDS memorial quilt. The square combines a ruby slipper from *The Wizard of Oz* and a hammer and sickle from the Communist Party of Great Britain. The slipper brings with it the possibilities of escape, an unlikely family of choice, the squashing and melting of enemies and Judy Garland herself as the tragic icon whose funeral connected memorialisation and loss with physical resistance and self-defence at the Stonewall Riots. The hammer and sickle remind us that Mark Ashton was not a spontaneous accidental activist: he was youth organiser for the Communist Party and took his struggle both in the party and beyond it seriously. The two images embrace the politics of pleasure alongside the politics of formal political organisation. They are the bread and the roses and the two hands shaking.

Both these objects make sense of my own political inheritance and explain the second reason why I found it so difficult to make myself watch the film. When *Pride* was being released my father was dying. My family on my Dad's side were miners at Grimethorpe Colliery. Post-war social mobility meant that by the time I was born my father was a labour economist who had played a role in the Miners' success in the 1974 strike (Carr, 2014). He brought up my brother, Toby, and myself, in a very different sort of world than the Barnsley miners' street where he grew up and that we visited in our summer holidays. I remember one powerful family story about my Grandfather from the days before the National Coal Board (NCB). He had swapped shifts with a friend. On that shift there was a terrible cave-in and my Grandfather's friend died. Filled with guilt he, like all of the community, went to the pit to try and rescue who they could and retrieve the bodies of those they couldn't. The rescue work meant that there would be no coal produced that day. Throughout his life my Dad kept the payslip his father had for that week. Under the amount paid the slip read 'zero' and written across it were the words 'No Coal Dug'. Under their contracts, no production meant no pay. So they dug their comrades out of the mine, on their own time. My Grandfather moved to Grimethorpe, known as a safer pit but one for 'strikers' nonetheless, shortly after. The invisibility of his labour on that day changed lives. Although *Brassed Off* made Grimethorpe's Colliery Band the centre of its story, in my Grandfather's case it was a different skill that mattered. He was offered the opportunity to move to Grimethorpe, because one of his brothers was an excellent footballer and they wanted him on the team. The story haunted our family and fed into their drive that my own Dad, and his children, would not spend his working life underground. The invisibility of my Grandfather's labour that day is partially how I ended up where I am and why I needed LGSM to help me make sense of the world.

I didn't want to see *Pride* because I would not be able to talk to my Dad about it. My research on the miners' strike had been a useful connection point between us: it bridged my background in queer cultural theory and his in trade union and Labour relations. Before *Pride* we had already talked about his life as cultural memory. He had been Barbara Castle's political adviser during the Dagenham strike, which inspired the film *Made in Dagenham* (2010). My Dad was, according to his own account, one

of the two civil servants depicted in a scene in Castle's office when she meets with the strikers' representatives. The story in our family story was that Castle didn't have any cash on her to donate to the fund herself, so he lent her some. He also was very pleased to verify the details of the film and the accuracy of the clothing. He was, unlike me, a man of quantifiable methods. Authenticity of the story was less important for me. That was, he said, because it wasn't my 'bloody story on the screen'. But remembering Dagenham still mattered to me. The connections between now and then, that puts women trade unionists at the front of the struggle, made it a useful story. As the striking miners' wives and daughters had taught us, women are not strike breakers, putting their domestic concerns over class consciousness – they are the drivers of gendered structural change.

The lessons that *Pride* left with me, when I finally did get around to watching it, were useful. *Pride* mattered to me, because LGSM mattered to me, because it made sense to me. Both the 'forgotten story' of LGSM and the film have offered the possibility of more than a brief handshake of recognition. They suggest a politics between identity and class politics, between the ruby slipper and the hammer and sickle, between the bread and the roses. Although unfulfilled, *Pride* reminds me that solidarity is more than a symbol.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to LGSM, Ben Jones, the organisers of '*Pride* and Its Precursors', my Dad (Derek Robinson) and my sisters at the Bugle Inn, who watched the film *Pride* with me, because I needed to and but didn't want to watch in on my own.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

- Cant, B** and **Hemmings, S** 1988 *Radical records: thirty years of lesbian and gay history, 1957–1987*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Carr, P** 2014 'Derek Robinson obituary'. *The Guardian*, 15 September. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/15/derek-robinson>.

- Chakelian, A** 2015 'As Momentum restricts meetings, how will Left Unity adapt to the Corbyn era?'. *New Statesman*, 10 December. <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2015/12/momentum-restricts-meetings-how-will-left-unity-adapt-corbyn-era>.
- Fannin, A** 2008 *Social Work Practice with Older Lesbians and Gay Men*. London: Sage Publishing.
- Gay Left Collective** 1980 *Homosexuality, power & politics*. London: Allison & Busby.
- Goodspeed, R** 2014 *Pride – the true story*, Left Unity. <http://leftunity.org/pride-the-true-story/> (Last accessed 08 August 2018).
- Gower, O** 2014 *Still The Enemy Within*. Available at: <http://the-enemy-within.org.uk/the-film-3/> (Last accessed 29 April 2019).
- Jackson, M** 2017 'Original member of LGSM urges LGBT voters to support 'Brave, compassionate' Jeremy Corbyn'. *Attitude*, 06 July. Available at: <https://attitude.co.uk/article/original-member-of-lgsm-urges-lgbt-voters-to-support-brave-compassionate-jeremy-corbyn-opinion/14862/> (Last accessed 08 August 2018).
- Jackson, M** 2018 'Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners brought the Left together – we can do it again'. *Labour List*, 12 March. Available at: <https://labourlist.org/2018/03/lesbians-and-gays-support-the-miners-brought-the-left-together-we-can-do-it-again/> (Last accessed 08 August 2018).
- Kelliher, D** 2015 'The 1984–5 miners'; strike and the spirit of solidarity'. *Soundings*, 60: 118–129. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3898/136266215815872953>
- Kerrigan, M** 2017 'Pits and Perverts' Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6NYu2DfSHs> (Last accessed 08 August 2018).
- Leeworthy, D** 2016 'For our common cause: Sexuality and left politics in South Wales, 1967–1985'. *Contemporary British History*, 30(2): 260–280. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2015.1073591>
- Lewis, D** 2016 'LGSM statement of support for Jeremy Corbyn's campaign to be re-elected Leader of the Labour Party'. *LGSM*, 11 August. Available at: <http://lgsm.org/news/280-lgsm-statement-of-support-for-jeremy-corbyn-s-campaign-to-be-re-elected-leader-of-the-labour-party> (Last accessed 08 August 2018).

- Medhurst, A** 1984 'Victim; Text as Context'. *Screen*, 25(4–5): 22–35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/25.4-5.22>
- Nelson, J** 2014 'Meet the Real-Life Heroes Who Inspired the Movie *Pride*'. *People*, 10 October. Available at: <http://people.com/movies/meet-the-real-life-heroes-who-inspired-the-movie-pride/> (Last accessed 08 August 2018).
- Nianias, H** 2015 'Pride the movie: Jonathan Blake'. *The Independent*, 03 March: 1.
- Payling, D** 2017 'City limits: sexual politics and the new urban left in 1980s Sheffield'. *Contemporary British History*, 31(2): 256–273. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2017.1306194>
- Robinson, L** 2003 *Gay men and the Revolutionary Left in Britain since 1957: tracing the development of identity politics*. Falmer: University of Sussex. (Unpublished).
- Robinson, L** 2011 *Gay men and the left in post-war Britain: how the personal got political*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7228/manchester/9780719074349.001.0001>
- Tate, T** 2017 *Pride: The Unlikely Story of the True Heroes of the Miners' Strike*. London: John Blake.
- Thomson, A** 2014 'Inspiring story shows how solidarity breaks down divisions'. *Solidarity Online*, 17 October. Available at: <https://www.solidarity.net.au/reviews/inspiring-story-shows-how-solidarity-breaks-down-divisions-2/> (Last accessed 08 August 2018).
- Watney, S** 1996 *Policing desire: pornography, AIDS, and the media* (3rd ed). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Watney, S** 2000 *Imagine hope: AIDS and gay identity*. London: Routledge.

How to cite this article: Robinson, L 2019 Thoughts on *Pride*: No Coal Dug. *Open Library of Humanities*, 5(1): 37, pp. 1–16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.317>

Published: 22 May 2019

Copyright: © 2019 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Open Library of Humanities is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Open Library of Humanities.

OPEN ACCESS